



Milwaukee County

Supervisor Joseph A. Rice, 6th District

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For Immediate Release

Contact: Joseph A. Rice, Milwaukee County Supervisor, District 6

414/278-4795

MILWAUKEE COUNTY BOARD PASSES ETHICS CODE REFORM

Comprehensive Revisions Designed to Foster Public Trust and "Culture of Compliance"

Milwaukee, WI – The Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors today unanimously approved a comprehensive set of changes to Milwaukee County's Ethics Code. The vote is the culmination of the recommendations of the Milwaukee County Ethics Code Study Committee, which began work in 2006.

Among the principal changes adopted were the following:

- **A more independent appointment process for the County Ethics Board** to help avoid any appearance of political influence, with new board members nominated by leaders of long-standing, broad-based civic, professional, and faith-based organizations in Milwaukee County.
- **Bar County officials from engaging in political activities** at the place of employment and identify activities not to be undertaken while acting in an official capacity.
- **Institute a robust ethics education and training program.** The 2008 Budget provides \$200,000 to implement the Ethics Code Study Committee's recommendations upon approval by the County Board.
- **Revise the Code of Ethics to make it more readable and user-friendly,** encouraging voluntary compliance and preventing unintentional violations due to lack of familiarity.
- **Clarify code language to encourage voluntary settlements of cases and urge those covered to seek guidance from the Ethics Board** on questions related to code compliance.

- **Adopting a new protocol in cooperation with the Milwaukee County District Attorney's office**, to identify the process for suspected code violations, offering Milwaukee County municipalities additional guidance in processing ethics questions.

“These reforms are intended to reinforce behaviors and values that reflect public officials’ responsibility to serve the interests of the Milwaukee County community as a whole,” said Supervisor Joseph Rice who chaired the Ethics Code Study Committee. “The changes reinforce the need for fair and impartial decision-making and the avoidance of use of public office for personal gain or advantage,” Rice added.

In addition to Supervisor Rice, other members of the Ethics Code Study Committee included Ms. Hannah Dugan (Appointee of Ethics Board Chairman), Mr. Charles C. Mulcahy (Appointee of County Executive), Dr. Joan Prince (Appointee of County Board Chairman), Mr. Robert Andrews (Appointee of Corporation Counsel) and Mr. Rick Ceschin (Appointee of the County Board).

“The work of this committee is to be commended for their insights, guidance, and contribution to a new body of law that will help instill a new, more ethical culture for Milwaukee County,” said Rice.

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